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Our London and what we can make of it

London

[1898]

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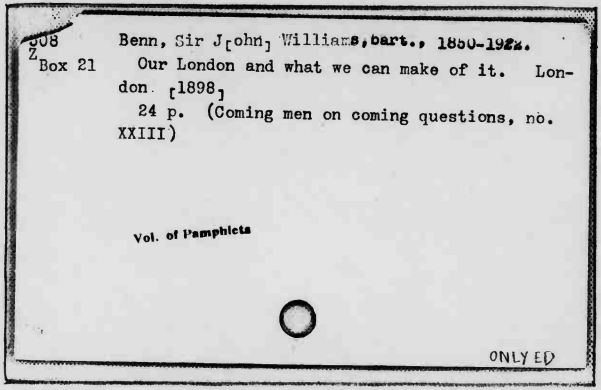
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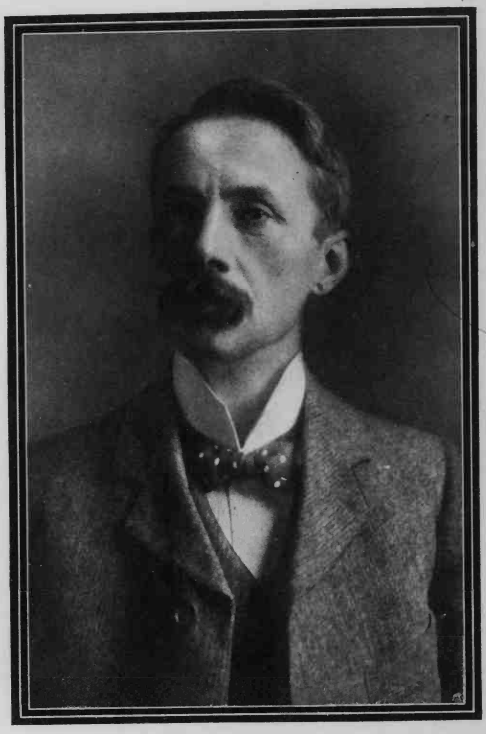

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AND WHAT WE CAN MAKE OF IT.

By J. WILLIAMS BENN, M.P., D.L., J.P.

Publishing Office:
3, WHITEFRIARS STREET, LONDON.

ONE PENNY.

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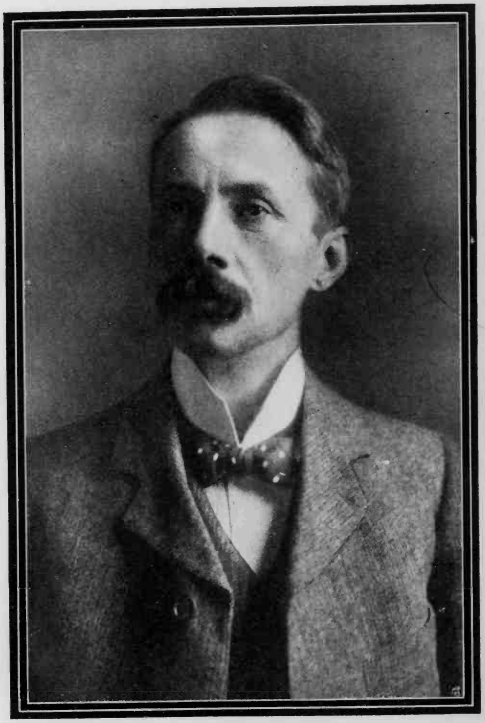

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J. WILLIAMS BENN, M.P.

MR. BENN'S name is closely associated with all recent Municipal reform in London. It is largely owing to his efforts that the fine L.C.C. electric trams have taken the place of the ancient horsecars. That blessing to Londoners—that tramway purchase—was however only carried by one vote in 1900. Who would wish now to return to the old order of things! Mr. Benn has taken a very active part in the Housing and Water questions. His public life has indeed grown out of the London County Council. He is one of the original members of that body, and organised, when whip, the first Progressive victory in 1892. His party has since then never suffered defeat.

In the same year he defeated Mr. Ritchie, then a Cabinet Minister, and was elected to Parliament for St. George's-in-the-East. In 1895 he was elected Vice-Chairman of the L.C.C., and in 1898 Chairman of the General Purposes and Highways Committees. His success was so great that he held the chairmanship for a period unprecedented in the history of this Council.

In 1900 he won the Tramway Purchase victory by one vote, but in 1895 the narrow margin was on the other side, and he lost his Parliamentary seat by four votes! In 1897 he fought a Bye-election at Deptford, and three years later stood as Candidate for Bermondsey. Although defeated on both occasions, he very largely reduced the Tory majorities. At the L.C.C. election in 1898 he won Kennington from the Tories, having left his own safe seat at East Finsbury for the purpose. In 1904 he was unanimously elected Chairman of the L.C.C., a post which he most ably filled. In the same year he was elected to Parliament, winning Devonport back for the Liberals by a majority of over 1,000. The following year he was made Deputy-Lieutenant of the County of London.

Mr. Benn played a leading part in putting through the measures which have at last enabled Londoners to travel in comfort on the Thames; and he has most strenuously defended the public interest on the telephone question. In Parliament he is regarded in conjunction with Mr. John Burns as being the mouthpiece of the L.C.C.

Few men have risen more rapidly to a place amongst the foremost workers and reformers of the day. Mr. Benn is only 55, having been born at Hyde, Cheshire, in 1850.

No man loves London better than Mr. Benn, and no man, perhaps, has a keener insight into the pressing problems which confront the municipal statesman in the great city which is the throbbing pulse of the Empire. He is distinguished alike for honesty of purpose, directness of aim, and for the conspicuous ability with which he can give effect to his views. But he is also intensely human and full of sympathy for the suffering and the poor. And John Burns was not overstating his case, when, writing to Mr. Benn during the St. George's election, he said:—"I believe that your loyal, persistent, and disinterested services for our great London municipality and your Parliamentary record have earned for you a greater victory than before. Your successful work, your courage in discharging your duties, and your initiative on London questions have helped the cause of progress in the House of Commons. Your good work on the Unemployed Committee, your immediate aid in dealing with Water, Gas, Tramway, and Railway monopolies, and in numerous questions affecting the real life of the people, such as the Eight Hours, deserves at the hands of the Electors the heartiest recognition."

OUR LONDON:
And what we may make of It.

By J. WILLIAMS BENN, M.P., D.L., J.P.,
EX-CHAIRMAN OF THE L.C.C.

My friend Mr. Stead requests me to say something "About London; what can be done to improve its administration; what legislation is still needed to make the Great City a fit place for men, women, and children to live in and a worthy capital of the Empire."

It is a great subject, already treated by pens worthy of the task, with which I cannot pretend to compete, but if evidence is desired from one who for over fifty years has worked in, and grown to love, its byways and highways, I am willing to go into the box.

"The key of the British Empire is London; she is the greatest city in the world; she will, I think, always be the greatest city in the world if her sons and daughters are only true to themselves." No better text can be found for my notes than these inspiring words of Lord Rosebery, the L.C.C.'s first Chairman, for they indicate that ideal civic devotion upon which the future of our City depends.

Our London as It is.

It brings no small satisfaction to those who have lived for London to find that at last their hobby is becoming interesting. Cobbett's wen is now said to give promise of beauty, and a recent writer has discovered it has a soul.

One may indeed now venture to express aspirations which a few years ago would have stamped the exponent as an impossible person. And, better still, the mighty city is itself beginning to care. Of all civic worms that of London has been most distressingly inert, but thanks to the kicks of my "Lord High Obstructionist," the greed of certain ground landlords, and last, but not least, the grip of the commercial monopolist, the metropolitan worm at last shows some signs of turning.

It is mainly to encourage that hopeful "turn" in London life that I venture to indulge in this survey of our City and its possibilities.

First it may be convenient to look at our London as it is, and at the risk of giving offence I shall venture to open a few doors which are generally locked against the distinguished visitors who come to study our ways. Such persons generally enquire: "Do you manage your City well?" "Is the cost of local

government equitably distributed?" "Has the trader a proper chance to ply his calling?" "Have the workers the same opportunity and the poor as much consideration as obtains in many other civilised centres?" "No" is, I fear, the truthful answer to each of these queries. Take the management of London; there is nothing more incongruous the world over, except, perhaps, in Rome. We have the heart in the centre, minus arterial connection with the rest of the corporate body. To prevent cohesion the limbs of that body have been skilfully severed by the dissecting knife of timid statesmen, and worse still, the vital parts omit, aye, decline, to contribute to the life of the complete organism.

To vary my metaphor, such Dives' districts as the City of Westminster, proud of their rateable value, wrap their purple cloaks around them, and relying on their legal position, refuse to share the needs of Lazarus and his kin who lie from Bermondsey or Poplar and plead for an equalisation of the burden. It is rather cruel when one remembers that districts like Westminster and Chelsea vastly inflate the price of property by pushing their slum population into squalid districts already congested, and then decline to share the consequent high rates which the poorer districts have to bear. "But it is the fault of the law, not mine," Mr. Dives will probably retort. Yes; but was not the leading plea for this separate corporate existence that it would keep down the rates of such places as Westminster? Now we see this short-sighted policy, like a curse, coming home to roost. Lazarus is still at the gate, and unless something is done to make the great burden of the London poor common to all, the dogs of our city will cease from licking the sores, and may once more turn their attention to the palaces of Dives. Such a resentment—may it never come—is one of the perils of London as it is.

After all is said and done, the seamy side of London shows but poor tailoring on the part of our statesmen. With all its wealth—a ground rent of fifteen to twenty millions of money—one in every five of its population die in the workhouse or hospital, and one in every ten has to be classified as an official pauper. This is not a very creditable aggregation for a Christian country.

I have placed the "Condition of the people" question first, but what about the "A fair opportunity to the trader?" Indeed, the two questions are intimately associated. My contention is that the shopkeeper is seriously and needlessly handicapped in London. In other great cities of the Kingdom the principle has been set up and readily confirmed by Parliament that certain necessaries of municipal life—water, lighting, power, means of communication, and housing of the workers—shall be kept free of a toll to any of the many skilful financiers who have their eyes on our corporate life as a means of earning dividends. In places like Glasgow, the sensible edict obtains that everything on or under the public streets must be managed for the "common good," and that any so-called "profits" shall be promptly used for reduction of the charge for the service rendered, of rates or other municipal amelioration. But this rule only obtains in a very limited degree in London. Our divided City is the happy hunting ground of an army of peripatetic prospectors, who, failing to get a footing in places blessed by unity of control and civic spirit, "go" for London. Such a scheme as the one which recently sought to place the whole of the electric lighting and power of London in private hands is a case in point. It would not have lived for a day in places like Sheffield or Glasgow, and yet here it very nearly succeeded.

"More Socialism" will most likely be the comment of some of my critics after reading this introduction. But this is really not so; the Socialist bogey won't do. Enquiry shows that the butcher, the baker, and candlestick maker really get the best chance in the cities where the "common good" is thus looked after. Make your city clean, healthy, attractive, and, above all, accessible

and easy to get about in, and people and trade will flock to it in abundance, and the tradesmen will flourish in proportion. Why have Bournemouth and like towns gone ahead in such marvellous fashion? Simply because of the prompt recognition of the municipal principle; that health, life, beauty, and mobility of population must be removed from the stock and share list and handed over to Citizen management. Wise old Tories who are skilled municipal experts in the towns which I have mentioned, smile if you accuse them of being Socialists because they carry out this policy. One distinguished Liberal Unionist, North of the Tweed, said, when I twitted him with such arrant Socialism in the life of his city, "Man, we do not call it Socialism here, we call it 'good business.'" And my Tory friend comes to London and says in astonishment:—

> "Why, your trams are twenty years behind the times, your electrical department is piecemeal, muddled and inadequate, your streets are paved on all sorts of systems, with no general plan on continuity; they seem to me to be always 'up.' The trade of your famous Port is going elsewhere for want of the public hand and purse behind it. Your Empire City seems to be at the mercy of any undesirable alien who likes to exploit it; it was not even strong enough in civic spirit or friends to insist that its Water Supply should be retained in its own hands. Is there another City in the Kingdom which would have stood that humiliation? And, worse than all, within a stone's throw of your Palace of Parliament, sadder still of your historic Abbey, there are slums and conditions of life which would disgrace even Constantinople."

Alas! It is all too true. The condition of London is at present much akin to that of the man who went up to Jericho. We cannot afford to wait any longer for the priest and the levite, useful as they may be. The citizens' urgent task is to get London on its legs again; to pour in oil and wine. For the moment it presents a sorry spectacle. Kicked by the Lords, exploited by the monopolist and maimed by an Act purposely designed to destroy its powers of self-preservation, it indeed is an easy prey to any of the many footpads infesting our municipal main roads. But the figure of a Good Samaritan, an awakened civic conscience, already appears on the road, and a new lease of life will be found at the Inn of the Common Good, whose doors have for long been protected by the rusty bars of Greed and Ignorance.

First, a Proper Civic Unity.

Not much good can be done unless you get a proper governing body to focus your endeavours. The Good Samaritan Himself deigned to utilise an ass. "Ah, there you have the London County Council," one of its many critics will doubtless exclaim. I am not sure that my friend is in error. The ass is a most useful animal, much misunderstood and under-rated, and peculiarly adapted to bear without wincing the heaviest blows from the thickest sticks. The ass of Spring Gardens may yet carry London to the goal of good government. I remember seeing a donkey on the cog railway at Pikes Peak, Colorado, and on the patient beast was painted this claim: "I built Pikes Peak Railway." It was true, for he had carried all the material up the mountainside. Born, as it were, by accident, disowned and discredited by its reputed progenitors, and abused more than any creature of its class, the wonder is that the ass of Spring Gardens lives and thrives as it does. Strange to say, the citizens, from those in high places down to the weary and afflicted poor, have come to regard this patient bearer of burdens as a true friend in need. If there is any troublesome baggage that no one else will touch, it is, as a matter of course, lumped on to

the back of the "L.C.C.," and the blundering quadruped goes on its way in such a plucky manner that persons who dislike both its breed and manners are constrained to wish it "God-speed" as it plods on to Jericho.

Here let me say that I have never regarded the London County Council as more than a mere stop-gap. It is the necessary outcome of that timid statesmenship which excluded the Empire City from the operation of Lord John Russell's beneficent Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. Had London been included in that great measure we should now have the joy of seeing the Mansion House as the real centre of Greater London's power.

What a chance our dear old City has missed in letting the mighty work of administering to the wants of the greatest aggregation of people on earth pass into other hands. For thus using endearing terms some readers may perhaps charge me with hypocrisy. The popular notion is that the L.C.C. thirsts for the blood of Gog and Magog, and has but scant admiration for their past or present belongings. "Down with the City" is supposed to be a progressive war cry. "Down with the L.C.C." is rather mine, if it be held to convey the extensions of the rights and dignities of the old City to all its children who now gather round its walls. If the City had only been endowed with the grace to accept in 1878 the scheme of Sir Ughtred Kay Shuttleworth, or in 1884 the still better measure of Sir William Harcourt, London would now be the envy of every capital in Europe. Instead of boldly taking the position made for it by history and good works, the City fathers of twenty years ago only saw, like the man with the muck-rake, the gain of the puny wall-bound territory of a mediæval London, and declined the sceptre of an extended dominion. But their folly did not stop there; they encouraged the growth of that hydra-headed monster, the London Government Act of 1898, and now they have the chagrin of seeing, check by jowl with themselves, the City of Westminster boasting of greater rateable value, antiquity, and courtly associations than even the Guildhall itself. Now, jostled by a crowd of rival and heavily decorated Mayors, the poor Lord Mayor has as much as he can do to protect his Right Honourable person from indignity and oblivion, and all because the Old City, the true inheritor of London's glorious story, had not the sense and pluck to take its proper place at the head of the Empire.

Is it too late to remedy this colossal blunder? Perhaps not. For my part I would gladly see the L.C.C. abolished to-morrow if some such comprehensive scheme could be carried. A house divided against itself cannot stand. If the City does not absorb the L.C.C., the L.C.C. must sooner or latter absorb much of the City, and it would be vastly better that the old civic rod should swallow the socialistic serpent. It will be impossible for much longer to maintain this divorce of dignities from drainage. The man who speaks "for London" to Monarchs, and Presidents of Great Republics, must have a stronger backing than some hundred nondescript electors in an obscure and antiquated City ward. He must be able to speak "In the name of this ten-millioned-peopled city," and London will soon justify that title. (It only mustered a population of 1½ millions in 1837, so that it has more than trebled its population in little more than two generations). If there be any City Fathers left great enough, far seeing enough, to put in this claim for their grand old heritage, let them now speak, or it may be a case of for ever after holding their peace. In my opinion the day of grace has not passed, and a due submission to the whole of the electorate on the part of the City would destroy, and should destroy, any carping objection from Spring Gardens or anywhere else against the prompt formation of a United London, founded as it should be on nine centuries of rights and privileges. Lord John Russell in 1835, in introducing the Municipal Corporation Reform Bill, said: "We propose that *the whole work and business of*

watching the town shall be placed completely under the control of the Council." Herein lies the secret of the prosperity of our provincial cities. Why should London wait?

About the Borough Councils.

It may be asked, "How do the newly-formed Borough Councils come into your scheme of unification?" The reply is that there is no need to limit the sphere or usefulness of these bodies except where their authority retards the proper discharge of central duties or the "common good." "London, one and indivisible," should be every loyal citizen's motto. The indivisibility of London is written in her physical history and on every chapter of the last fifteen years of her municipal life. We are clamouring for municipal tramways; we cannot split up the intersecting lines that run like nerve filaments through our streets any more than we can parcel out our main sewers or divide the Thames into compartments. We cannot allow the West End to build round itself a wall, and to say to the needy East or South, "We know you not." We will not see these districts weltering alone in hopeless poverty, or consent to separate the City of Pleasure from the City of Work.

Except in one or two conspicuous instances, it cannot be said that the new Borough Councils have justified their existence. Notwithstanding their new titles and the bait of robes and chains, they have not attracted a class of men superior to those who served London under the old Vestry system. Indeed, in the poorer districts, the paucity of good men gives just cause for alarm. The Act stupidly limited the selection of aldermen and councillors to the area of the borough concerned. This limitation has prevented many good and leisured citizens from serving, as I believe they would gladly do, parts of London where educated administrators, with no axe to grind, are sorely needed. Dozens of capable men in Mayfair would gladly give a day or so a week in serving Poplar or Mile End, but they are prevented by this inane residential provision in the London Government Act. One cannot help thinking in this regard of the views and aims of Arnold Toynbee. The great danger of the democratic upheaval of the time appeared to him to be the estrangement of the men of thought from the active leaders of the people. This resident qualification seriously limits the growth of that newborn interest of the educated in social questions, which is one of the most hopeful signs of our times. But to return to my point. The local management question should be settled on the lines of Sir William Harcourt's Bill of 1884. Large district councils working closely in touch with the central body—instead of being constantly trying to thwart it—would give excellent results for the whole of London, and tend to economy, efficiency, and purity in our administration. I add "purity" because recent cases—notably that of Holborn—show that the present system offers a premium to that class of Tammany from which our municipal life in this country has hitherto been remarkably free. And so to commence the good work of the future we want a municipal machine working from a common centre instead of the curious contrivance by which one little section may destroy the work and ignore the wishes of the great majority. But even this centrally-directed engine for good is not enough for our purpose.

London's Boundary must be Amended.

At present 900 square miles and the 15 miles radius from Charing Cross do not by any means embrace all her children on the doorstep. Agricultural counties like Essex find themselves faced with municipal problems from overflowing London, which they do not understand and with which they cannot cope.

It has long been evident that these huge districts formed on the immediate borders of the county, such as East Ham and Ealing, Walthamstow and Wimbledon, happily called the "dormitories of London," must sooner or later be included in the Metropolitan Area. Already we have had to enlarge our borders for police, water, and other purposes, and it would solve many difficulties if these new districts were now taken under the wing of the City to which they really exist to minister.

This remodelling of the boundary would solve many troublesome problems, notably the vexed question of jurisdiction with regard to the Home Counties. Take a case in point. Because the electric lighting area for bulk supply extends beyond the present county line, fixed but a few years ago on the limited view of the possibilities of the future, therefore—argue the promoters of the great "Administrative Scheme"—this duty cannot be undertaken by the present county authority. And so with regard to water and tramways. The Royal Commission on London's traffic have in my judgment fallen into this same error. A special "Transit Board" must, they say, be created to cover the real tramway area of London. How much simpler to extend the boundary line in order to take in, at any rate, the bulk of these suburban growths. There is no magic or finality about the present geography. Slices were taken from various Home Counties to make up the present Greater London, and it is clear by this time that they were not large enough. Unless this amendment is made, and soon, London will be afflicted with such a curse of various "Boards" as will once again make confusion worse confounded, and greatly add to the expense of civic management. Misgoverned as it has been by 500 and odd local authorities, Councils, Boards, Commissioners, or parish beadles, it welcomed the desire shown by the London Government Act—otherwise sadly inadequate—to reduce the number of its rulers. Like the lion in the net, this environment rendered London powerless, and it was not until the mouse of Spring Gardens widened the meshes that the noble beast could help itself. And now we are threatened with more "authorities!"

London's Water, Port, Lighting, Tramways, and goodness knows what else, are to have separate Boards because the present map shows that certain places are not strictly in London. The whole thing is the sorry story of the old City over again. Oppressed with the solemnity and antiquity of their historic square mile, the City Fathers lost their opportunity to fulfil their destiny. London wall has long since crumbled, but the fragments which remain are still sufficient to shut off from service "in the City" some of London's most notable sons.

What we want, and at once, is a Boundary Commission to amend the county boundary, and the present time, when there is a talk of re-distributing for electoral reasons, is extremely favourable for the purpose. Thus amended, we shall get complete schemes for the great public services which the Metropolis need, and those services can be controlled, if not rendered, by a representative and directly elected body eminently fitted to survey and provide for the whole of the proper area and the vast population.

The Growth of Slum Suburbs.

It is indeed time that we made an end of the piecemeal chandler's-shop treatment of a great problem. For instance, how essential it is that there should be a prompt and scientific planning of these huge suburbs which are closing in, hugger-mugger fashion, around London. They are dumped down anyhow, and many of them, being built with but small regard to proper provision for light and air, are already becoming pestilential slums, and presently "the

rights of property" will render their removal difficult. It cost the L.C.C. more per head of the population to remove the festering district at the back of Shoreditch Church than it did to erect the present working-class dwellings on the Boundary Street area. Landlords who should have been punished for thus living on the rents of such a social dust heap were, under our present beneficent laws, handsomely compensated for keeping up the death rate. And in a few years' time the same thing will occur over and over again unless this larger view of London for which I am pleading is taken. We have much to learn from Germany in this respect. There, under recent legislation, each town is supposed to carry through a far-seeing "Land and Transport policy," adapted not only to present, but to future needs. A few years ago the Prussian Government issued directions to the Governors of the 12 Provinces into which the kingdom is divided that they should use all their influence to induce every Prussian town to buy as much land as it could obtain, and to retain possession of all it then held and should afterwards acquire.

In Germany it is recognised by careful thinkers on the subject that it is necessary that at all times there shall exist very carefully thought-out plans, prepared by the Town Council, for opening out for building as much of the land surrounding a town as will probably be needed to supply sites for houses and all the other institutions and places required by the community for a period of twenty, thirty, or, at least, ten years, and due provision is made for the necessary open spaces to keep these areas healthy. In our suburbs the whole scheme is framed on a pot-luck principle, and some of the recent "growths" round London make one shudder. They already require the knife of the municipal surgeon. And the expense and agony of it all! But apart from German models, I think I have made out a case for a grip by a wise central hand of London's environment. Given an authority with sufficient powers and control over a properly devised area, we have now to consider

The Proper Work of a Unified Authority.

What should it do? It should ensure that all the persons who are allowed to live within its jurisdiction shall exist under conditions which are as favourable as possible to the maintenance of physical, mental, and moral health and strength. It should minister to the body, mind, prosperity, safety, amusement, protection, and corpse of every man, woman, and child. It should ensure that more persons than can well live in health in the town as a whole, or in any one part of it, shall not be allowed to live there. It should, as I have indicated, do as efficiently and economically as possible all such work as can only, or can best, be done by a public body for the maintenance or enhancement of the health and wealth of the community. It should see that an adequate supply of new wholesome houses is among the most important of all the public works which have to be attended to. It should set up a fair Labour policy based on Trade Union rates of wages, not only for its own employees, but also for those employed by its contractors, and should rigorously suppress sweating. It should encourage the direct employment by the Council, so far as practicable, of its own workers; and, as means of assisting the unemployed, arrange and press forward its great works and undertakings at times when the general labour market is slack. Remembering John Bright's famous dictum that "A nation lives in its cottages," it should ever bear in mind that a city lives in its slums. If the slums are slummy, then the city is decadent. You may talk and "think imperially," but you will not raise imperial stock on municipal dunghills. This is, perhaps, a large programme, and I cannot promise to deal with it adequately in the pages allotted to me by my inexorable editor.

Perhaps it will be best to button-hole my imaginary citizen, who I venture to hope is by this time sufficiently interested to follow me to the end of these pages, and tell him what in my judgment he should demand of his administrators and legislators, for himself, his wife and children, *i.e.*, if he is disposed to get the best that is possible out of *his* London. It will be a pleasanter process than that of throwing statistics or drafts of Parliamentary Bills at his defenceless head. Presuming that we have set up, on the lines already indicated, a body strong, big, and wise enough to deal with not only London as it is, but London as it will be a generation hence, I shall, in fancy, follow my indulgent citizen from the cradle to the grave, or, to put it more pleasantly, from the milk in the morning until midnight, and so prod him as to his rights and privileges that he may perhaps be seized and possessed of that spirit which made his predecessors, the Londoners of old, so effectually plead for and defend their liberties that no monarch, priest, or parliament could say them "nay."

In what order shall we place the items of the demand note? It has been urged of late that cheap food and commodities are of little avail unless there is good trade and work for the unemployed. "We must live somehow" is the plea of the workmen, and some of the needy and ignorant are captured by the specious argument, "A cheap loaf is of little use if you have not the money to buy it." It is no part of my present duty to plunge into the fiscal controversy but I shall claim the support alike of Tariff Reformers and Free Traders when I say that proper facilities for trade are among the first conditions of a town's prosperity. The citizen, solicitous as a worker for constant employment, or as a capitalist for a proper chance for the use of his brains and money, should promptly enquire as to whether his London has the needful appliances to retain and extend its industries. Enquiry will soon reveal the fact that our City depends largely, if not chiefly, upon its shipping trade, and that one of the first things to he done is to

Reform the Port of London.

It must be remembered that 50 per cent. of our trade enters the docks. In 1899 the value of goods imported into the port of London was £164,000,000; into the rest of the United Kingdom, £320,000,000, London's proportion thus being 33 per cent. The total exports from the port of London amounted to £88,000,000 or £89,000,000; from the rest of the United Kingdom £241,000,000, London's share being 26 per cent.

The man who wonders why trade is growing abroad should learn off the story of our great port, and he will find sufficient employment for his reforming energies between now and the time when our fiscaliters have found out a better way. Here again we discover the usual London jumble—fifty different authorities having jurisdiction. They consist of thirteen Government Departments, several dock companies, the Watermen's and Lightermen's Company, the London County Council, the City Corporation, the Metropolitan Asylums Board, four local bodies, four other municipal bodies the Wharfingers, several railway companies, the Lea Conservancy, and last, but not least, the Thames Conservancy.

How have they done their work? The best answer is obtained from the Report of the Royal Commission recently presented to Parliament. Dealing with the body mainly responsible for the conduct of our river, the Thames Conservancy, the Commissioners say:—

> "The Thames Conservancy has done little or nothing to satisfy the requirements of the port."

"The most important function entrusted to the Thames Conservancy has not been attended to."

"The constitution of the Thames Conservancy is not such that we can advise that it should have power to raise revenue or exercise the responsibility of executing the works which we have felt it our duty to recommend."

Here we see the blighting effect of a public body which is not directly representative. I will not discuss the status or doings of the forty-nine other authorities having a finger in this pie. Such a muddle would not be possible in any place but dismembered London. It is enough that these bodies have failed, as such a conglomeration of authorities must do, in properly dredging our river and making our port attractive and replete with modern appliances. It is true that of recent years figures have shown some slight improvement in London's shipping, but the advance has been but little compared with the progress of rival ports, both home and continental, on which huge sums have been lavished by the State or municipal authorities. Until recent years the trade of the port of London increased; from 1859 to 1879 as much as 40 per cent., but between 1890 and 1899 the increase fell to only 17 per cent. Meanwhile the trade of other ports in this kingdom and on the Continent has gone ahead by leaps and bounds. From 1890 to 1899 the trade of Rotterdam increased 116 per cent.; Southampton, 77; Antwerp, 51; Hamburg, 49; Genoa, 34; Glasgow, 23; Hull, 23. As to the efforts made to produce these results. In 1888 £6,000,000 was spent upon the port of Hamburg by the State of Hamburg and the Imperial Government. The ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp have been improved by the municipality which controls them, with assistance from the Government, and quite recently another subsidy of some millions has been granted. In France the Government has done much for the ports. In Glasgow and Liverpool great things have been accomplished by public management.

But we Londoners have been blundering on, and gradually falling behind when compared with other shipping centres, in our proper share of wharf and dock business. "Why not put the matter right at once? Surely no political interests are involved," is the natural enquiry of the plain man. I cannot here describe in detail the efforts of the London County Council to deal with this matter. Some interested persons did not like their proposals. The L.C.C. then promptly stood aside to allow the Government to deal with the matter. A Royal Commission was appointed, and a Government Bill brought in, largely based on its report, but frightened by the opposition of the old city, the Thames Conservancy, and some trade interests which were affected, the Board of Trade sacrificed all the time, labour, and money spent on this proposed reform, and fell back on masterly inactivity. Let my citizen friend who desires to save his job or extend the trading opportunities of London make his demand short and insistent. There must be an organised control of the whole business, in the shape of a single authority—upon which private interest may well be represented—with full powers over the whole port, and there should be transferred to that authority all the powers of the numerous bodies which now exercise jurisdiction. This policy would of course involve the purchase of the docks, and the dredging, deepening, and general improvement of the lower part of the river. This done, and we should appreciably minimise, if not abolish, that riverside distress which forms so large a part of our unemployed problem in London, and another result would be the cheapening and extension of our food supply.

It is perfectly clear that a unified Port of London Authority is urgently needed to do the best possible for what is and should be the greatest port in the

world. The matter is more than ever one of life and death to our citizens, for constant employment can only be secured through a prosperous staple industry, such as shipping is to London. It is important next to consider how the people fare with regard to

An Unfettered Supply of Cheap Food.

If there is one thing more than another essential to the life of a great city, it is plenty of food at first hand and first cost. So apathetic and ill-informed is the average Londoner as to his affairs that he never enquires how he is fed or how much is made out of his food before it reaches him. Not one in a hundred know that the city, plus a duke and a millionaire, levy a gross annual revenue of a quarter of a million sterling on London's provender. Five millions of people patiently rely on the inadequate market provision which is owned by this benevolent triumvirate, and hitherto all efforts have failed to place these markets in the hands of a central authority able and willing to look at the service from the point of view of London as a whole, and to relieve the food of the poor from an iniquitous toll.

Charles II. had a wonderful way of conferring market rights on favoured courtiers. He gave the Fourth Earl of Bedford permission to set up a market in the old garden of the Convent of Westminster, and it is still with us. "Mud-Salad Market" has for long been a theme of Mr. Punch. The Duke, having secured a considerable revenue from his narrow square market, gracefully leaves other people to pay for the paving, scavenging, and lighting of the streets, which are daily crowded with the vehicles keeping this market going. A similar story attaches to Spitalfields Market which is so essential to the sustenance of the great eastern districts. The City is, of course, the great market authority, and is supposed to supply the necessary accommodation for the vending of cattle, meat, poultry, and fish for a population of five millions.

It is a well-known fact that but for subsidies from market revenues the Old City could not keep up its hospitalities. The City purse has of late years been liberally replenished from these sources, and this drain all adds, of course, to the price of the people's food. It seems a little incongruous that the estimable Common Councillors should not infrequently be feasting royalty—and themselves—at the Mansion House and Guildhall, and that the poor of London, through their food, should have to pay the piper. This is one of the "liberties" to which the present City Fathers stick most tenaciously. Some years ago the L.C.C. endeavoured to get Parliament to allow it to enquire into all the mysteries of our market accommodation but the House of Lords, the firm friend of the Old City, struck the clause out of the Bill. It was understood that apprehensions with regard to Billingsgate occasioned this protest against "a clean breast." It is curious that the efforts of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts to bless Bethnal Green with a market, and those of Mr. Plimsoll to bring fish to South London, all failed. There are stories of "fish rings" and other dark and devious ways of keeping the present market monopolies intact. We certainly shall never get at the truth, or a remedy of the present muddle, until Parliament gives our Central authority full powers to enquire into and undertake, at cost only, the food supply of London. I cannot leave the question of food without referring to water. It is said of the righteous that "his bread shall be given, and his water shall be sure." I shall not rest upon the latter part of that promise so far as London is concerned until I see a new supply from Wales. I do not desire to disparage the labours of the new Water Board, though it is a creature of Parliament designed largely to flout the asperation of the L.C.C. It must be

remembered that but for reactionary opposition the Council would have purchased the water undertakings seven years ago, and the price would have been much lower, because two quinquennial valuations have taken place, each of which has enabled the companies to increase their income by taking advantage of the higher valuations. Then the money could have been raised at about 2½ per cent. It will cost the Water Board about a third more. This double loss to the ratepayers is directly due to the obstinate opposition of an impossible Government, and London will now pay dearly for their obstructive policy.

And so our citizen must hammer away on this question of food and water until he gets the justice which his provincial cousin has for long enjoyed. His "job" safe and his food cheap, the question of

Adequate Housing for the Workers

may be placed next. "What a question to deal with in a paragraph." One may say of London, of the building of houses there is no end. Within the time of some of us London's population was under two millions. Kensington was still in grass and market gardens, Islington was a rural retreat, Lambeth marshes were unbuilt upon, Woolwich was a day's journey away, Ludgate Hill was the centre for fashionable shopping. The City shopkeeper used to live over his shop, the brewer next door to his brewery; now only some of the workers are still to be found in overcrowded courts near the factory. Then, look at "Locomotion," so intimately associated with "Housing." At the beginning of Victoria's reign buses had only just been introduced, and the old mail and stage coaches were the chief means of travel. We have covered those districts with houses, and we have motor-buses and tramways galore, and yet there is a housing problem. Let me say at once that in my judgment it is idle to suppose that any central authority can undertake to house a tithe of the industrial population of London. It can only "come to the rescue," specially in cases and districts where unscrupulous persons are taking advantage of any local or general house famine. Further, to build and run municipal dwellings on a finance which involves a charge upon the rates must end in failure and disappointment. "Charity rents" mean a subsidy to wages, and the working of the old Poor Law teaches us what that means. But very much may be done to lead the way in the housing question. Some of the provincial cities, notably Liverpool and Glasgow, have set up most valuable object lessons in this direction. The L.C.C., though hampered in all sorts of ways, has cleared 30 acres of disease-spreading slums, thus disturbing some 14,000 persons; but it has already provided for 23,000, and is building for 75,000 more. Well-planned suburbs at Tooting, Norbury, and Tottenham, covering some 300 acres, all show that at Spring Gardens an extended view is taken of this great question. It cannot be claimed that the L.C.C. has been uniformly successful in its housing schemes. Alas! it is not infallible. Mr. Chamberlain, one of our greatest municipal experts, said of it: "The L.C.C. has made a great number of mistakes; it has aped the manners and the powers of the Greater Parliament; it has been a little like the frog in the fable that thought itself an ox." It will, I think, be agreed that upon the inflatory habits of the frog, if not the manners of the ape, Mr. Chamberlain can speak with unrivalled authority.

Indeed, upon housing the working classes he is entitled to be heard. He fathered a scheme to enable the ambitious artizan, with the assistance of the municipality, to acquire houses, but for some reason or other not a score of our workers in the County of London have availed themselves of Mr. Chamberlain's method. With all respect to this eminent critic of the Council, the housing question must be faced from another point of view. The last census showed beyond

dispute that three-fourths of a million of our population were living under conditions officially declared to be "overcrowded," and while that blot remains London government cannot be regarded as satisfactory. In connection with this useful work the citizen should insist upon vigorous enforcement of the clauses in the Housing of the Working Classes Act and Public Health Act against owners of slum property, and also as regards the Factory and Workshops and the Nuisances Removal Acts. In planning for proper dwellings, where required, for the working classes buildings on the barrack system should, as far as possible, be eschewed, and ample light and air secured in all cases. An extension of the cottage dwellings now being erected by the Council is, where practicable, most desirable, and further self-supporting model lodging houses of the type in Shelton Street, Drury Lane, or Carrington House, Deptford, cannot fail to be of service.

Hurry Up with the People's Motor Car.

Next to an ample supply of good houses at reasonable rents there ranks the question of adequate means of locomotion and proper management of our traffic. An important Royal Commission has just declared itself on this great subject, and I cannot do better than recommend my citizen friend to back up the demand of the Commission for new streets, a complete and largely extended system of trams, a co-ordination of tube railways and workmen's trams, and the whole of London's locomotion devised and controlled by one instead of many hands. It is an admirable report, an arsenal of facts for future use, but it lacks in two important points. It does not say who is to pay, and it avoids the responsibility of suggesting that the L.C.C., or such a new central authority as I have suggested, should be constituted the supreme Traffic Commission for London. It falls back on the feeble suggestion of "another Board" to be constituted, because the duties suggested extend beyond the present county boundary. To say the least, this is a poor recognition of what the L.C.C. has already accomplished.

I well remember the state of things when, fourteen years ago, I first moved on the Council, under Mr. Shaw Lefevre's beneficent Act of 1870, for "tramway purchase." Then, thirteen tramway companies did as they pleased, rather than as the people pleased, with the streets of London. There was no connection, co-ordination, or, indeed, common gauge with their services, and out of this disjointed and unsatisfactory system they were reaping a profit of a quarter of a million annually.

Would it be believed that ten years ago, in framing a leasing scheme for the tramways north of the Thames, our cockney anti-municipalisers made no provision for the prompt substitution of electric for horse traction, and that the scheme had to be sent back so that proper electric traction clauses might be inserted. These blind leaders of the blind did not see why the patient workers of London should not continue to consume their annual quota of that desiccated manure which is incidental to a horse-traction system.

At last the citizens have got the tramways in their own hands. Even the futility of leasing instead of municipally working the Northern system is at last apparent, and so the fatuous lease is to be bought back. As for the South, the electric tramways of the Council have brought new life and prosperity to the whole of the district, so much so that neighbourhoods which a few years ago were afflicted with the notion that "tramways meant deterioration of residential property" are all asking for electric trams at the earliest possible date. And now the Royal Commission comes along backing up the Council's demand, and indicating routes involving a prompt addition of at least 100 miles

to London's tramways, or including "fringes" some 200 or 300 miles. Apart from this much-needed extension, an immediate linking up of our tramways, north and south, is insisted upon; and why not? As I have already indicated, the carriage of the Lord High Obstructionist stops the way. "He keeps the bridge," as "Mr. Policeman Punch" so inimitably puts it. The injustice of this obstruction is the better realised when it is remembered that the ratepayers who are unanimously asking for this user of their thoroughfares paid no less than a million and a-half for the construction of the Victoria Embankment and Westminster Bridge, and find £14,000 a year for their upkeep. Yet my lords say "No" when the real proprietors of this property put in a respectful request, backed, be it remembered, by the old City, for a circular tram service from the present Westminster Terminus across the bridge, along the Embankment, and back by Blackfriars Bridge to the terminus at Blackfriars. This business-like scheme would mean for the public an end of the present distressing crushing and crowding at the existing tram termini, involving danger to life and limb of thousands of tram passengers, many of whom are young girls, and abolition of the weary tramp of the workers on wet mornings and evenings across the bridges, and of the delay caused by the reversing of cars at bridges now involved. It would mean a tram service continuous and much quicker than at present, taking the workers nearer to their employment, and providing a delivery but a few seconds' distance from Charing Cross, and also within touch of the City; and, further, one that would bring the public direct to the finest thoroughfare in Europe—the Victoria Embankment, a boon alike convenient to the worker and the pleasure seeker. By using our own bridges and embankment the earnings of our own tramways will increase by thousands of pounds. Strange, indeed, that in this 20th century there should be a body strong enough to resist this request of the London ratepayer to utilise his own bridges and embankment for the convenience of himself and his employees, and incidentally for the relief of his unduly inflated rates. The injustice smacks of feudal times—the castle on the hill and the serfs in the valley below. Here is a reason, if I advance no other, for my citizen friend to buckle on his civic sword and fight like 'prentice of London for the restoration of his "liberties." I cannot do more than hint at the possibilities of this great locomotion question. Mr. Charles Booth touches the spot of London's overcrowding difficulties when he insists upon increased means of communication as a first means of salvation.

In addition to a liberal scheme of surface tramways, certainly, for the most part, on the conduit system, shallow tramways, like to the one just completing under the new street, are much wanted for our crowded thoroughfares. The simple device, so well carried out in Boston, U.S.A., and other cities, consists of gutting the crowded streets some 12 or 15 feet down, and while perfectly restoring the old street surface (indeed, not disturbing it during construction), securing beneath a well lighted and easily accessible tramway track, with plenty of space on either side for the placing and getting at of all the water, gas, electric, pneumatic, and other mains which at present crowd and destroy the soil beneath the surface of our streets. If this perfectly practicable plan were general, half our pedestrians would be removed from the street surface, and there would be no more breaking up of the streets at the whim of a private company. One can hardly realise the Londoner coming into his own in such a remarkable manner. At present a gassy foreman plants his tripod, lantern, and scaffold poles in the midst of the Strand, builds his hut in the centre of his fortifications, and successfully defies London. The shopkeeper whose trade is destroyed pleads in vain. The newspapers publish the usual curses, but to no purpose. It is King Monopoly, who, having found London on the way to Jericho, is now exercising his predatory rights and

enjoying the spoils. And until London possesses the unity and strong central hand of other cities this majesty of muddle will continue to rule.

The development of London's new steamboat enterprise is, of course, intimately associated with the tramways and the whole question of communication. The remarkable popularity of these boats shows that the Thames possesses resources both for business and pleasure which have not yet been fully utilised.

London for many years past has had a service of steamboats of which nearly all the boats were very old. They were respectable only on account of their antiquity, their average age being 22 years.

In 1901 the L.C.C. introduced into Parliament a Bill to provide a proper service, and though bitterly opposed by the private interests concerned, it passed "second reading," but was rejected by the Select Committee.

It was stated in the House of Commons that private enterprise could supply all the service needed. The result was that London in 1902 and 1903 had no passenger steamboat service whatever. Now, an excellent L.C.C. line of steamers is running, and as to its final success there can be no more doubt than there is of that of the tramways.

The effective control of the traffic, both on streets and river, means eventually giving the control of the London police to the Central Body. Why it should not be so I cannot understand.

All other great towns have had the complete control of their own police since the Municipal Corporations Reform Act of 1835. In introducing that measure Lord John Russell said that in establishing municipal government it seemed to him "absolutely necessary" that they should have the control of their own police. Surely London has the same right and the same need for the control of its own police as any other great town.

The London police are the dearest police in England; they cost a ninepenny rate. They are managed by the Home Office, which is not responsible to the ratepayers. There has never been any complaint of the control granted to our great provincial towns. Order is as well kept, property is amply protected and the utmost cordiality and good feeling prevail in these places between the people and the police.

Lighting and Power for London.

This question has of late been forced to the front by the Parliamentary incident to which I have referred. No department of London government shows to greater disadvantage than that associated with the supply of electric light and power. Here, again, the question has been settled by the local instead of the central eye. Some of the new boroughs, properly anxious to show their importance and business ability, plunged into electric lighting and, collaterally, the supply of power. They were compelled, of course, to confine their operations to their own areas. Other boroughs let in the companies, many of whose powers overlapped. So London became divided for electric lighting purposes, not with regard to efficiency of production or distribution, but by some old ecclesiastical boundaries which centuries ago marked off parsonic preserves. Thus, a piecemeal system of lighting and energising London obtained. The central body, the L.C.C., seeing the confusion and, more important still, the fact that electricity to be produced at a low cost must be produced in bulk in large generating stations where coal could be landed direct from the sea, raised a warning voice, and, further, asked Parliament to endow it with powers to come to the rescue of the Borough Councils.

But the jealousy of the Borough Councils, and the opposition of the companies who had already farmed out parts of London, gave the Bill no chance in an

unsympathetic Parliament. Then the Government promised to take the matter up; but they did nothing.

In the midst of this confusion it was but natural that the private speculator should come along and make an attempt to monopolise this great business. With arguments in favour of wholesale production that were unanswerable, and a wonderful power of appeasing opposition, this universal provider of electrical power for London almost got his way, and certainly should do so unless London itself at once takes the matter into its own hands.

There is only one way out of the dilemma, and that is the installation of the L.C.C. as the bulk authority for electric light and power purposes. The latter object will become the more important, and it is idle to suppose that power can be divorced from lighting. With the Central Body as the wholesale producer, and the Borough Councils mainly as distributors, a scheme could be devised which would greatly reduce the price of both light and energy, and save London from a monopoly which might become very troublesome. Power could certainly be supplied both to big and little industries at prices which would compare favourably with any company quotations. Moreover, with the London County Council as authority for the supply of electricity, there could be a sensible and economical combination for the supply of electric power for tramway and other purposes with that for supplying light.

It is not generally recognised that the L.C.C. is already carrying out this identical enterprise on a gigantic scale for its tramways, but is barred by its Act from supplying lighting or power. The setting up of the L.C.C. as Bulk Supply Authority would merely mean the extension of a business which is already being conducted with success.

If all the areas to be supplied could not be brought within the new county boundary, there is nothing to prevent the central body purveying—as is done in provincial cases—lighting and power to areas on the border of its territory.

No need hammers more strenuously at the door of London as it might be than this demand for light, "more light," and power, supplied at first cost on commercial principles.

Teaching the Young Idea.

The division of municipal life just discussed naturally suggests "light and leading," and the citizen, having secured his "job," house, tram, steamboat, electric light and power, may well give an eye to the future of the children.

It goes without saying that London should be the finest rearing ground the world over for the young idea.

The home of our scholars, poets, and philosophers cannot afford either for practical or historical reasons to rank second as a mental and technical nursery. Its streets are filled with names recalling some of London's noblest sons. Chaucer, Shakespear and his confrères, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Goldsmith, Lamb, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, all lived in and loved their London. It is true that the immortal bard was kept out of the old City as a rogue and vagabond, and had to build his theatres in what is now the L.C.C. area; but, like that much criticised body, he eventually lived down his critics and got into society. In a city with such memories as London we must try and offer, so far as is possible, an equal opportunity for all her sons.

The recent Education Act is said to make the realisation of this dream possible. I shall not discuss its blemishes, but simply state what has been and can be done under its auspices. Some good people, smarting under no fanciful or imaginary grievance, blamed the L.C.C. for putting the Act into operation. The men who took that action were not unmindful of the grievances of the

Nonconformist conscience. The popular leader of the Progressives, Mr. McKinnon Wood, thus put the case:—

> "We cannot regard the recent Education Acts as a final settlement of a great national question. We object to religious tests for teachers in any public schools, and we desire that the expenditure of public money shall be controlled by elected representatives of the people; we look to Parliament for a speedy amendment of the Education Acts, which have offended the consciences of law-abiding citizens. Meanwhile, desiring that the law shall be administered with impartial regard to educational efficiency, we approve the appointment by the Council of an Education Committee from its own members, with the addition of women, who are still excluded from the Council." (Cheers).

That Education Committee under the able chairmanship of Sir William Collins, assisted by a devoted and distinguished band of experts, has already made a great advance on the road towards a co-ordinated system for London.

I may remind my readers that the idea that the education of a city should be vested in and form part of the work of its Council did not originate with the present Government.

Matthew Arnold, in 1868, wrote: "The real preliminary to an effective system of popular education is, in fact, to provide the country with an effective municipal organisation." And, again: "Public education must rest upon the municipal organisation of the country."

John Stuart Mill, himself a pioneer in London reform and an ardent advocate for unification of its local government, in 1861 insisted on the "important principle that in each local circumscription there should be but one elective body for *all* local business, not different bodies for different parts of it."

Given a remedy of the injustices of which the progressive leader complains, I think the future of education lies with the great central body in whatever form that may eventuate. I need not here tell the story of the building up of that system of elementary education for London by its School Board, a work which will always be remembered with gratitude and admiration. It is sufficient to say that the Council has taken over that vast work, with but little amendment, and has been grappling with the harder task of levelling up the Voluntary Schools to the standard of the Board Schools. What I want my citizen friend to understand and encourage is the building upon this foundation of a means—some call it a ladder—by which his clever boy or girl may attain to the greatest educational or scientific altitude, and so equip himself or herself, if the necessary brains and energy are forthcoming, for the most exalted position in the State.

As the Education Rate will be much talked of, I may dwell for a moment on how it is spent.

The County Council maintains by its grants over 3,000 separate evening classes in science, art, modern languages, trade instruction, domestic economy, and almost every conceivable subject, open at merely nominal fees to young men and young women alike, and organised in fifty different institutions scattered all over London.

It aids and inspects more than forty efficient Secondary Schools under public management, where a sound education of modern type is provided for both sexes, above the level of the Elementary Schools, at low fees, with free places and scholarships.

Every year the Council awards more than 1,500 scholarships to enable children and young persons to obtain an extended education. These scholarships are granted to those who show exceptional ability, and whose parents'

means are insufficient to allow them to continue their education if unaided by the Council.

To meet one of the greatest needs of the day the Council is greatly increasing and improving the teaching of foreign languages, both in schools and evening classes. Instruction in commercial subjects is now given in evening classes at thirty different centres. And, in order that Londoners may be better fitted to compete with their foreign rivals in trade, the Council has got established one high grade school specially designed for the best possible training of lads who intend to enter upon commercial life.

The Hammer and Hand Department.

There has been a feeling abroad among the ratepayers, specially the handicraftsmen, that there was rather too much of the schoolmaster and too little of the technical instructor in the curriculum of our London education. It is fair to the Council to say that much has been, and is being, done to remedy this complaint. It is a well-known fact that London employers do not take apprentices as they once did, and thus the Cockney boy is unfairly handicapped in competition with the country boy. The Council has established an experimental school for lads between fourteen and sixteen who are intending to enter upon an industrial career, with the object of giving them instruction which will enable them to compete on more equal terms with the country lad who has the advantage of an apprenticeship. If this school succeeds, many others will be opened. One for girls is now being got ready.

Again, the Council either maintains, or aids in maintaining, practical workshop classes in more than a hundred separate trades, at twenty different centres, where young mechanics can get instruction of a character likely to be of service to them in their trades. In order to make this instruction really practical, and to keep out the mere amateur, no one is allowed to attend a trade class unless he or she is actually working in that trade.

Further, it is the aim of the Council to place within easy reach of the home of every Londoner a polytechnic or a technical institute of which there are already more than thirty doing excellent work. These institutions are not only educationally useful, but are among the best means of promoting temperance, thrift, and general good conduct in the rising generation.

And in the midst of all this the girls are not forgotten.

The Council maintains fourteen special schools of domestic economy, where 800 girls of fourteen or fifteen receive six months' or a year's free training in cookery, dressmaking, laundry-work, housekeeping, and the laws of health.

This is but a rough sketch of the efforts made to teach the young idea how to shoot. Such work costs money, and the question is, "Will the London ratepayer stand the bill?" Sir Oliver Lodge put the case for higher education in words which may be commended to any grumbler. He says:—

> "Our national economy in higher education is having disastrous results; it is a real danger to the nation. While other nations are investing millions of public money on higher education and research, we prefer to keep the money in our pockets in order to spend it privately; and the result is that while the State is poor, the individual is rich. Individuals are over-rich in this country; money breeds money on our present system with very little work, and it is apt to roll itself up into portentous and top-heavy fortunes. The result is, I fear, a state of things that some people say is becoming a scandal. I do not know. But however that may be, I should like to see this wealth owned by communities; I should like to see it in corporate hands and expended for the general good."

If in that spirit we build up the men and women of the Empire City, we need not fear the decadence through foreign competition, of which one hears so much. In this connection I must mention the new scheme which was placed before the Council a few months ago, through Lord Rosebery, for the creation of a great technological college. The Council, recognising the value of such an institution, and the necessity, in the interest of London, and, indeed, of the nation, of providing "facilities for research in the application of science to industry, and in those branches of pure science which are likely to lead to industrial developments," has agreed to give substantial assistance to this scheme.

In view of this illustrious example of private generosity, it seems a growing shame that the City Guilds and Companies do not realise their duty towards the needs of London in this important matter. Twenty years ago a Royal Commission of great weight and free from political bias held that those bodies possessed, outside trust funds and obligations, a revenue of half a million sterling per annum, "the inheritance of the London poor," which they declared to be applicable to "the improvement of workmen's dwellings, public baths, parks, and open spaces, etc.," and primarily to technical education.

A Municipal Policeman still Wanted.

We have not yet arrived at the glorious and blessed time when the municipality can allow the man "on the make" to do as he pleases in London. And so my citizen friend must still retain his detective in plain clothes; it may be to stop jerry building and the creation of slums; to secure public safety in theatres, music halls, and all public places; to protect poor people from short weight and bad quality in their purchases of coal; to labour at securing better quality in the gas supply of London; to greatly improve the sanitary administration all over the Metropolis, and insist on the vigorous suppression of nuisances and adequate control over noxious trades; to put a stop to floodings in many districts, from which the houses of the poor greatly suffer, and to vigorously enforce the Weights and Measures Act. Coals, bread, and all sorts of things come under this police work, and the value of it is best known to those on the verge of starvation. Take bread; the Council found that many shops in the poorer districts were "sweating the loaf," that is, selling two-pound loaves that fell considerably short of two pounds. Twelve thousand inspections of bread are now made every year, with the result that the shrinking of the quartern and half-quartern loaves has been stopped. It is something to help a poor wife, struggling to keep a decent home on a pound a week, to secure an extra ounce or two every day in her scanty bread supply.

But let it not be supposed that I claim originality on the part of the L.C.C. for this beneficent work. It is merely copied from the old City. The aldermen were originally a military body, and used to inspect weights, and held "assizes" on bread and ale to test quality.

The baker was pilloried in those days for selling putrid bread, and the taverner was condemned to swallow his own undrinkable wine, and to have the remainder poured on his head.

Perhaps in one or two respects our L.C.C. "goes one better" than the worthy aldermen. It inspects all "baby farms," keeping two qualified ladies to go round to see that the unfortunate infants in these places are not starved or ill-treated. Largely through its instrumentality seats have been provided in 13,000 shops for girls employed therein, greatly to the advantage of their health and physique. It tries to guard the poor against the frightfully dangerous

mineral oils and faulty lamps that cause so many accidents; but cannot yet get from Parliament the power to prohibit such dangers to the public.

My advice to the citizen is that his policeman may still be wanted in our London of the future.

Lungs and Leisure.

The parks and open spaces have been well called "the lungs of London." In them the citizen is more and more spending his leisure. All honour to the men whose foresight and money secured to London the many open spots which contribute more perhaps than anything to keep down its death rate. Let their example move us to snatch at every open space which can be secured at a reasonable price. The L.C.C. has done something in this direction. It has increased the number of London's parks and open spaces from 40 to 102, and their area from 2,656 to 4,879 acres; and, as to leisure, it has provided music in all the parks; greatly increased the facilities for games; provided bathing facilities for women as well as men; vastly improved the supply of refreshments; and in a thousand other ways ministered to popular enjoyment.

There is a little matter to which I attach great importance, and I desire, in the interest of our young people, to enlist the hearty sympathy of my brother citizen in its favour. Provision is made annually for the maintenance of grounds for cricket, football, lawn tennis, bowls, quoits, and other games. For some of these games a change of clothing is necessary, and in the past the only accommodation procurable was at the public-house. Being persuaded that it would be greatly to the advantage of the players to remedy this unsatisfactory arrangement, the Council determined to provide the requisite accommodation. So dressing rooms and shelters have been provided, and the young people are enabled to enjoy their play without being compelled to seek the conveniences offered by the publican.

How greatly municipal music adds to the pleasure of the leisure of the citizen is attested by the thousands whose savage breasts are soothed by its influence. The Council has liberally carried on the provision of music for London. Last year it provided more than fifteen hundred band performances, and its policy has been to provide more and better performances each succeeding year. This is a policy which requires backing up and extending. Our model London must be musical.

A Clean and Sober London.

In the 14th century every man had to keep clean the front of his own tenement. In the spirit of that ancient example let us make a determined attack on dirt, whether coming as soot from the chimney or such as is incidental to the public vehicle which is horse-drawn rather than electrical.

If I said "Down with the dirt and the drink," some might, to my regret, take my last phrase literally, but I do earnestly desire to see less temptation to drink. The L.C.C. has abolished 118 licenses, and has always had careful regard to the existing supply of public-house accommodation in the district after the demolition of those acquired for the improvement. The practice of the Council is to obtain a report as to the number of licensed houses within an area of 300 yards of the licence under consideration, and in every case the number of licensed houses has been found to be excessive. Therefore the Council has from time to time resolved to abandon the whole of the 118 licences in strict obedience to the spirit of the law, which directs that where a public-house is not wanted it should not be.

It has pursued this Temperance policy without wavering, and despite very strong criticism, for fifteen years, and has received the solid and continued support of all who care for Temperance reform.

Safety to Life and Limb.

The splitting up of London has, fortunately, not been able to destroy the efficiency of the central hand in this regard. To destroy or amend death traps is most beneficent work. Nearly half-a-million of persons nightly frequent places of amusement in London. To get them home safely to bed is no light or unnecessary task. This supervision of the theatres and music halls has often been criticised on the ground of strictness, but the memorable calamity at Chicago showed the necessity of absolute independence and unceasing care on the part of the public authority.

More important still is the work of the Council's Fire Brigade. It has enormously increased our protection against fire, and diminished the number of serious conflagrations by continuously extending and improving its stations and appliances. Since 1888 the machinery and men for this service have nearly doubled. All the old fire stations have been either re-built, like Redcross Street, City, and Euston; or enlarged and brought up to date, as Clerkenwell and Whitechapel; or new stations added, as Whitefriars and Kingsland. The main engine for life saving in London is now the horsed escape, which is sent out first on every fire call. It can travel a mile in five minutes, and arrives at any fire with four fresh firemen, ready to save life, while the old system was the heavy and cumbersome hand escape, in charge of one or two firemen, who arrived far too exhausted to be of much use in a burning house where lives were to be saved.

London's fire brigade has a heroes' list which will compare favourably with that of many a crack regiment. To grope through blinding smoke and stifling heat in the midst of falling timbers and melting lead in order to save life requires more than ordinary and in some cases more than military courage.

The citizen will always give a foremost place to London's great life brigade.

The Poor, and Them that have no Helper.

On the eve of a great inquiry which is to examine and report upon the working of the Poor Law it may be presumptuous to offer any opinion. The proper treatment of the unemployed cannot be dealt with in a paragraph. Of two things, however, I am persuaded. First, that it will be a pernicious thing if the unemployed are led to expect that the State must provide work for them if they cannot find it elsewhere; and second, that a prompt differentiation must be made between the loafer and the worthy worker, who is, perhaps for a few weeks only, "down on his luck." That the latter should go through the same mill as the former only tends to the manufacture of vagrants. Given a list of the genuinely employable as against the worthless and hopeless, and I am sure that more sensible means can be devised for their relief than those which at present obtain. With regard to the Poor Law as now administered, I have already pointed out the inequality of the rates in various districts. That the ratepayers of Poplar should pay a rate twice that of the City or St. Martin's-in-the-Fields is manifestly unjust. Nothing short of a common rate for London will meet the difficulty.

Not only in rates but in treatment the methods of dealing with the poor in London vary greatly, and require co-ordination. A new body, possibly a branch of, or working hand in hand with the central body, should be formed to absorb the present poor law authorities. No one can regard all the present

guardians as either having sufficient public backing behind them, or as the best persons for this delicate work. One and the same body should administer the Metropolitan Asylums Board and the Common Poor Fund. Such a united authority might devise some kind of municipal old-age pension; the elimination of our sick poor and infirm from the Poor Law system; and treatment more akin to home life for the fifty thousand children who are minus responsible parents. Such a body might be keen to remove the pauper taint on both adult and child. In our London there should be an end of overlapping and frequently injurious private charity. As part of this scheme it would, I think, be far better that the hospitals should be under public management, and in saying this I do not undervalue all that has been done by private beneficence and a noble profession for institutions which have been and are the brightest spots in suffering London.

Where's the Money to come from?

It may be that I have carried my citizen with me thus far in this propaganda for the building of a better London. He has joined the Metropolitan Society of Optimists, but alas! is suddenly pulled up by the rate paper. Like many others who are too busy to enquire into the facts, he jumps to the conclusion that, as it is, too much is being spent on these "socialistic fads" by the L.C.C. and other bodies, and that to extend these "experiments" means ruin to, among others, "the struggling shopkeeper." As to the charge of extravagance, I cannot do better than give the words of Lord Welby, a distinguished servant of the State:—

> "The Council, when it came into existence, fifteen years ago, inherited a heavy arrear of necessary work. During the intervening period it increased its net debt—that is, the debt incurred for its own purposes—by £12,568,000. The larger part of this increase in the debt (£8,413,000) has been incurred for main drainage, asylums, the fire brigade, parks, street improvements, etc. The public, far from objecting to this expenditure, are disposed to criticise the Council for not having spent more on these great branches of ordinary administration, which are wholly unconnected with what has been called municipal trading.
>
> "The remainder of this debt has been incurred for remunerative services, viz., the housing of the working classes and tramways. The Council had, up to March 31st, 1903, housed 19,628 persons, and was in process of housing 78,480 more. It has done this great work without imposing any burthen on the ratepayers up to the date of the last completed account. The revenue from the tramways, after providing interest and sinking fund on borrowed money, has, up to March 31st, 1903, contributed £293,000 in relief of rates.
>
> "It must be borne in mind, moreover, that during this period of fifteen years London has been increasing, that large areas of new buildings have come into rating, and that juster valuation has been in progress. The produce of the rates has increased proportionately, and hence, large as have been the additions to the Council's debt, the charge of interest and sinking funds on the individual ratepayer have increased but slightly. That charge amounted in 1890 to 7¾d. in the £. It rose in 1903 to 8¾d.—an increase of one penny in the £—a small burthen compared with the beneficial work which it represents. Lastly, let me point out that the debt of the Metropolis as a whole (that is to say, the debt of all the Metropolitan Authorities taken together) is lower in proportion to its rateable value than that of any other city or great town in England and Wales, Liverpool only excepted."

These facts show, I submit, that the London County Council has not been an extravagant or wasteful steward of the revenues entrusted to it, and they justify me in contending that the financial position of the Council is sound, and its credit such as befits the first municipality in the kingdom. So much for the existing state of things.

But More Money is Wanted,

and the ratepayer naturally contemplates with alarm an increase to a burden which to many is already overwhelming. The solution lies in my citizen friend insisting that those who get most out of London shall pay most. Not a few people are in London only for the purpose of what they can get out of it. There are undesirable aliens of various kinds, and among those who should be made to pay, if they stay, is our old friend the ground landlord. The case against him cannot be stated too frequently.

The growth of our modern civilisation renders an early readjustment of the incidence of taxation an absolute necessity. The main reason for it is found in the phenomenal increase of the local rates during this half-century. The increase of culture has made the people spend money on sewers, street improvements, parks and open spaces, public buildings, and education. Fifty years ago the total sum levied by rates in England and Wales was about 8½ millions. Now it is nearly four times that, an increase which is, of course, most marked in our towns. In London since 1874 the rates have risen 70 per cent. These rates are raised on property consisting of two factors—buildings and land.

The first represents no more or less than the builders' charge for the bricks and mortar. It is a fixed sum, which as time goes on depreciates rather than increases.

The second represents a value which is solely due to energy of the occupiers who go to make up the town. But for the presence of the toiler the land would revert to agricultural value.

Now, what has the good-natured fool of an occupier done and is still doing for the land-owner?

First. He congregates on the land and gives it a village value.

Second. He proceeds to make streets, sewers, build public offices, etc., and gives it a town value.

Third. He adds parks, open spaces, schools, and makes it so attractive that he invests it with a fabulous city value. Some parts of the City of London are said to be now worth £100,000 an acre.

Thus the occupier positively pays *twice over* for his whistle. First he pays for the improvements which make the land desirable and valuable.

Then the landlord steps in and makes him pay the increased value in rent Could anything be more manifestly unfair?

London is full of illustrations of the iniquitous result of this system. The Thames Embankment is but one of many cases—the ground landlords enriched and the wealth producers impoverished.

It may be said that the occupier derives a benefit from these new streets, and sewers, and other town attractions. But how short that benefit is in the case of leasehold property. The landlord eventually turns out the man whose toil and money have made the City and asks a rack rent of a new-comer.

These are a few of the reasons why we want at least three financial reforms to assist in properly financing our City. First, the taxation of land values; second, a further equalisation of rates, or, better still, complete unification; third, a readjustment of the nation's account with London, so that the doles which it receives—as Exchequer contribution grants—may be based on its contribution

to the national coffer; in short, a readjustment of the unfair settlement of 1888.

As so I might continue for many pages more in describing things to be done and wrongs to be righted before London is what it should be, but I must conclude.

London Made.

There are some towns in which the citizens point to a statue or effigy—Birmingham crosses my vision for the moment—and say "That man made this town." I started with a promise to try and show what we might make of Our London. To again quote Lord Rosebery, "If her sons and daughters are only true to themselves," the day will come when London may realise some of that fulness of existence which in disjointed fashion I have endeavoured to picture. Happy the children who can then say "My parents and grandparents had a notable hand in bringing about this glorious time of 'each for all.'" This work of making London yields a blessed dividend of present satisfaction and future promise. Able men, from dukes to labour leaders, have wisely and willingly given a hand to it during these fifteen years, and they all declare that it is work well worth the doing. Among them, years ago, was a talented young poet, Fred Henderson, and to bring my talk to a fitting end I shall borrow some beautiful and little-known lines which, inspired by the L.C.C. Progressive Victory of March 5th, 1892, he gave to London:—

> Here then you have your answer, you that thought
> To find our London unawakened still,
> A sleeping plunder for you, thought to fill
> The gorge of private greed and count for naught
> The common good. Time unto her has brought
> Her glorious hour, her strength of public will
> Grown conscious, and a civic soul to thrill
> The once dull man that for your spoil you sought.
> Lo, when the alert majestic city stands,
> Dreaming her dream of golden days to be,
> With shaded eyes beneath her arching hands
> Scanning the forward pathway, like a seer
> To whom the riven future has made clear
> The marvel of some mighty destiny.

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